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Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, OAU, XF, XA, SG, LI
SUBJ: DENNIS AT AFRO-ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE - DAKAR

REF: (A) DAKAR 2824, (B) MUSCAT 506

1. SUMMARY: IN MEETING MAY 21 LIBERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER C. CECIL DENNIS SPOKE OF HIS SELECTION AS CO-CHAIRMAN AT APRIL 19-23 AFRO-ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN DAKAR. HE DISCLOSED TO AMBASSADOR CARTER HIS EFFORTS TO CURTAIL ARAB ATTEMPTS TO DOMINATE THE CONFERENCE AND DESCRIBED THE SUCCESSFUL TACTICS HE EMPLOYED TO PREVENT ADOPTION OF CONTROVERSIAL JOINT COMMUNIQUE. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER DENNIS, DURING MEETING TO DISCUSS OTHER MATTERS, LAUNCHED INTO SPIRITED ACCOUNT OF HIS ROLE AT APRIL 19-23 AFRO-ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE. EXPRESSING HIS DESIRE THAT THE STORY BE KEPT "BETWEEN YOU AND ME AND THE GATE POST", DENNIS INDICATED THAT HE WAS SURPRISED ON ARRIVAL DAKAR TO BE APPROACHED BY SENEGALESE FOREIGN MINISTER SECK WHO ASKED HIM TO CO-CHAIR CONFERENCE WITH BAHRAIN FOREIGN MINISTER KHALIFA. OAU SECRETARY-GENERAL ETEKI AND SECK INDICATED TO DENNIS THAT EARLIER DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN HELD IN WHICH IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE JOINT MEETING SHOULD HAVE JOINT CHAIRMEN, ONE REPRESENTING OAU AND ONE
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REPRESENTING ARAB LEAGUE, RATHER THAN FOLLOWING USUAL PROCEDURE

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OF GIVING CHAIRMANSHIP TO HOST COUNTRY. DENNIS TOOK QUESTION TO AFRICAN CAUCUS WHICH UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED HIS DESIGNATION AS CO-CHAIRMAN OF CONFERENCE.

3. DENNIS RELATED HOW LATER HE WAS CALLED TO MEET WITH SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ARABL LEAGUE RYIAD. MEETING BEGAN WITH ARGUMENT OVER DENNIS' LATE ARRIVAL (HIS CAR WAS MYSTERIOUSLY NOT AVAILABLE). RYIAD HAD MET WITH SECK AND NOW ATTEMPTED TO PERSUADE DENNIS THAT DENNIS AND KHALIFA SHOULD SERVE AS CO-VICD-CHAIRMEN WITH SECK ACTING AS CHAIRMAN. DENNIS OBJECTED TO DECISIONS BEING MADE IN SMALL CLOSED-DOOR SESSION AND INSISTED ON NEED TO MEET WITH AFRICAN CAUCUS ON WHOSE INSTRUCTIONS HE WAS NOW ACTING. RYIAD OPPOSED DENNIS' TAKING QUESTION TO OAU BODY SO SUBJECT WAS DROPPED.

4. DENNIS PLAYED ROLE (REF A) IN INSISTING THAT SEPACATE ARAB LEAGUE AND OAU CAUCUSES SHOULD MEET PRIOR TO SUBMITTING DOCUMENTS FOR CONFERENCE-WIDE CONSIDERATION. HE INDICATED THAT ARABS WERE PREPARED BEFORE MEETING WHILE AFRICANS HAD "NOT DONE THEIR HOMEWORK." STRESSING THAT CONFERENCE SHOULD CENTER ON ECONOMIC ISSUES RATHER THAN POLITICAL ISSUES LACKING A COMMON CONSENSUS, DENNIS FEARED THAT ARAB POLITICAL POSITIONS COULD BE FORCED UPON GENERAL BODY UNLESS AFRICANS COORDINATED THEIR EFFORTS. HE OPPOSED SECOND JOINT SESSION UNTIL ANOTHER AFRICAN CAUCUS WAS HELD BUT YIELDED TO ARAB ARUGMENTS THAT INTERNATIONAL PRESS WOULD MAKE MUCH OF FACT IF JOINT SESSION WAS HELD ONE DYA AND THEN FAILED TO MEET AGAIN THE FOLLOWING DAY. MEETING WAS HELD FOR APPEARANCE SAKE, BUT AT DENNIS' INSISTENCE WAS NOT DESIGNED TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING OF SUBSTANCE - AT LEAST UNTIL OAU POSITION WAS COORDINATED.

5. DENNIS INDICATED THAT HE AND OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS WERE ANNOYED THAT ARAB STATES HAD REPRESENTATION AT ALL OAU CAUCUS SESSIONS, WHILE NON-ARAB AFRICAN STATES HAD NO ACCESS TO ARAB LEAUGE SESSIONS.

6. DENNIS CLARIFIED EVENTS AT CLOSING SESSION (REF A) IN WHICH HE WAS ABLE TO BLOCK LAST MINUTE ATTEMPT BY ARAB STATES TO FORCE THROUGH PURPORTED JOINT COMMUNIQUE. WHILE ARAB DELEGATES AND MANY NEWSMEN AND MEMBERS OF DIPLOMTIC CORPS HAD COPIES CONFIDENTIAL

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OF THE COMMUNIQUE, ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE DOCUMENT WAS NOT AVAILABLE UNTIL MOMENTS BEFORE ARABS EXPECTED CONFERENCE TO ADOPT IT. DENNIS AND OTHERS HAD EXPECTED BRIEF ONE-PAGE STATEMENT SKIRTING MAJOR ISSUES AND WAS SHOCKED TO DISCOVER THAT ARABLS WERE ATTEMPTING TO RAMROD THROUGH A FIVE-PAGE REPORT WHICH INCLUDED SEVERAL CONTROVERSIAL ASSUMPTIONS.

6. DENNIS REPORTED THAT HE, AS CHIARMAN, HONORED SOMALIA

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REPRESENTATIVE' REQUEST TO SPEAK, WHILE DENNIS AND LARGE CROWD OF MINISTERS ARGUED OVER THE COMMUNIQUE AND THE PROPER WAY TO HANDLE IT. HE ARGUED THAT HE COULD NOT GO HOME AND TELL TOLBERT THAT HE HAD APPROVED A COMMUNIQUE THAT HE HAD NOT EVEN HAD TIME TO READ OR STUDY. HE NOTED THAT THE ARABS WERE ACTING IN LEAGUE ON THIS POINT - EVEN FOREIGN MINISTER OF MOROCCO (WHO DENNIS HAD SUPPORTED PREVIOUS DAY ON POLISARIO RECOGNITION QUESTION) WAS SIDING WITH VOCAL ALGERIAN REPRESENTATIVE THAT COMMUNIQUE SHOULD BE ISSUED.

7. RESPONDING TO THOSE WHO ACCUSED DENNIS OF EMBARRASSING GOVERNMENT OF SENEGAL (ESPECIALLY PRIME MINISTER DIOUF WHO WAS WAITING IN WINGS TO GIVE CLOSING REMARKS) AND WHO THREATENED TO ADOPT COMMUNIQUE OVER DENNIS' OPPOSITION, DENNIS THREATENED THAT IF COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED HE WOULD "TELL THE WORLD" HOW THE ARABS HAD FORCED ADOPTION. ISSUE AS FINALLY DROPPED AND MEETING CLOSED.

8. AT MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR HERE DENNIS HAD ASSISTANT READ OUT LOUD THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MAY 7 "JEUNE AFRIQUE" ARTICLE REPORTING ON AFRO-ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE. HE NOTED HOW ARTICLE HAD DISTORTED FACTS, HOW IT QUESTIONED WHETHER DENNIS WAS BEING DIRECTED BY THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL, AND HOW, IN GENERAL, WAS NOT VERY SYMPATHETIC TO HIM OR TO BLACK AFRICANS.

9. HE BELIEVED HE HAD DEFINITELY MADE SOME ENEMIES AT CONFERENCE BUT ALSO APPEARED TO FEEL GOOD THAT HE HAD STOOD UP TO ARAB PRESSURE. IT SEEMED IMPORTANT TO HIM THAT HE ATTEND UPCOMING CONFERENCE IN ALGIERS TO SHOW THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN INTIMIDATED BY THE ARAB LEAGUE.

10. IN CONCLUDING, DENNIS VOICED HIS SUSPICIONS THAT SENEGALESE
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HAD RECEIVED FUNDS FOR THE CONFERENCE FROM THE ARABS AND HAD PERHAPS RECEIVED ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR ACQUIESCENCE TO ARAB DEMANDS.
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